



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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TDA Awarded \$130K to Launch Animal Identification in Tennessee *Premises Identification First Step in National System*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- State Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens today announced the Tennessee Department of Agriculture will soon begin livestock premises identification with the help of a \$130,000 USDA grant. The grant was awarded to the state as part of a nationwide initiative to ultimately identify all livestock as well as their location and movement.

"The creation of a National Animal Identification System is the single most important development in animal agriculture in decades," said Givens. "It's an important step in further safeguarding Tennessee's and the nation's livestock industry from the threat of disease. We also hope to increase the marketability of Tennessee livestock as an added advantage of the program."

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is a program intended to identify specific animals in the United States and record their movement over their lifespans. It is being developed by USDA and State agencies—in cooperation with industry—to enable 48-hour traceback of the movements of any diseased or exposed animal.

"Although the idea of a national system is not new, the initiative has been stepped up in recent years as a result of the increasing number of animal disease outbreaks that have been reported over the globe," said State Veterinarian Ron Wilson. "Rapid diagnosis and quick response are the most critical components in being able to control and minimize the impact of animal disease, which could cost Tennessee's livestock industry millions of dollars and threaten human health too."

The USDA grant will be used to hire a state animal identification coordinator under the direction of the State Veterinarian's office. The grant will also help cover the cost of outreach, training and equipment.

"The program is voluntary, but we expect that most of Tennessee's farmers and livestock dealers will want to participate, especially when they come to better understand and appreciate the importance and value of the initiative," said Wilson.

The first step towards a nationwide animal identification system is to identify and register all premises. A premises is a unique, identifiable physical location where livestock can be found and includes places such as farms, feedlots, auction barns and stockyards.

According to Wilson, the State Veterinarian's office will assign identification numbers unique to each location. Identification numbers along with basic premises information such as the contact,

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facility type and address will be entered into a national database administered by USDA. The database can be directly accessed only by state and federal animal health officials for the purpose of animal disease protection.

The department is partnering with the University of Tennessee Extension, the Tennessee Farm Bureau and the USDA Farm Service Agency to allow farmers in the near future to obtain a premises identification number at local offices. Part of the USDA grant will be used to help train the staff of partner agencies on how to help farmers and livestock dealers register their premises. Wilson says other partner agencies may be added as the program expands.

The second phase of the NAIS program, to be implemented next year, will be to individually identify all livestock, or lots of animals in the case of poultry or swine, with a unique 15- or 13-digit number. Animals will be tagged according to species using a variety of methods including ear tags, radio frequency and imbedded microchips that can be scanned or read every time livestock changes ownership.

Wilson says the goal is to make the premises registration service easy to use and accessible to as many people as possible. The department expects to begin issuing premises ID numbers in early summer. For more information, contact the State Veterinarian's office at (615) 837-5120 or visit USDA's National Animal Identification System Web site at www.usda.gov/nais .

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